

Mold and the Indoor Air Quality Crisis in Public Schools

One in five schools reportedly has unsatisfactory indoor air quality as microbiological contaminants, and volatile organic compounds contribute to increased absenteeism and chronic respiratory problems like asthma.

(PRWEB) March 8, 2006 -- Parents, teachers, school administrators, and particularly children have a common enemy in public education -- poor indoor air quality caused by a variety of contaminants such as [mold](#), microbes, and chemicals. Though about 55 million people, or 20 percent of the US population, spend their days in elementary and secondary schools, indoor air quality was reported to be unsatisfactory in about one in five public US schools, according to the National Center for Education Statistics of the Department of Education.

“Staff and students deserve a healthy indoor environment that is conducive to teaching and learning,” states a US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) “Tools for Schools” brochure. “Yet indoor levels of air pollutants may be 2-5 times higher, and occasionally 100 times higher, than outdoor levels. Poor indoor air quality can cause headaches, fatigue, sinus congestion, coughing, and sneezing; it can promote the spread of airborne infectious diseases. Indoor pollutants can be particularly harmful to students with allergies or asthma.”

Asthma alone accounts for over 14 million missed school days per year. Asthma’s prevalence in schools has been linked to mold, bacteria, higher concentrations of volatile organic compounds, and higher relative air humidity.

[Mold](#), perhaps the severest threat to indoor air quality, has caused school closings nationwide from Arizona to Maine, California to Florida. School districts have spent millions on mold remediation. At the extreme end, District 303 in St. Charles, Illinois, spent upwards of \$28 million on mold remediation, renovation, repair and temporary facilities.

A process called “ThermaPure”, licensed by E-Therm (www.thermapure.com), an environmental remediation innovator based in Ventura, Calif., uses superheated, dehumidified air to disinfect, decontaminate, and dry out buildings in much the same way heat is used to pasteurize milk.

In the ThermaPure process, technicians use portable heaters, fans and air scrubbers to inject superheated air into the affected space, raising the temperature of a single room or entire structure to as much as 160° F for several hours.

Heat has shown to be effective in destroying active mold growth sites, and kills viable spores, bacteria, viruses, protozoa, insects, and other heat-sensitive pests and organisms. Heat also accelerates the off-gassing of odors, VOCs and toxins, even in inaccessible areas, without the use of harmful chemicals.

When used in conjunction with or instead of traditional “remove and replace” remediation, ThermaPureHeat treatment can significantly cut the cost of improving a school’s indoor air quality and reduce the timeframe (loss of use) of school facilities while remediation is taking place.

Because research has shown heat to be effective in destroying allergen proteins, such as dust mite allergens beginning at 140 F, ThermaPureHeat treatment is an effective way to control a range of indoor allergens that can incite asthma or respiratory problems.

The process, in fact, can significantly reduce common asthma triggers such as insects, dust mites, cockroaches, fungi, and bacteria in addition to [mold](#). Formaldehyde, VOCs, pollen, animal dander, and second-hand smoke are among other indoor irritants that may be reduced.

For More Information:

Dave Hedman

E-Therm, Inc.

180 Canada Larga Road

Ventura, Ca. 93001

Phone: 1-866-665-3432

Fax: 805-648-6999

www.thermapure.com

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Contact Information

Dave Hedman

E-Therm, Inc.

<http://www.thermapure.com>

866-665-3432